



Status of Food Security in Himachal Pradesh An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

There is growing concern about the availability of enough food to poor and vulnerable communities of the population at all sphere, national as well as state level. It has been estimated that of about 6 billion people of the world, 600 million people suffer from hunger. The recent report of Global Hunger Index 2019 (GHI) India has been performing poorly on food security frontier, ranked 102nd out of 117 countries of the world and placed at the bottom as compare to its south Asian neighbors. The recent GHI report focused on “challenge of hunger and climate change” states that climate change is making it ever difficult to adequately and sustainably feed and nourish the human population. Climate change has adversely affected food production, availability, access, quality, utilization and stability of food systems. In present scenrio agrarian distress is quite pronounced in India while country’s granaries are overflowing. The hilly state of Himachal Pradesh is no exception to the whole country on the issue of food security. The state has been given KRISHI KARMAN AWARD for its landmark achievement for the highest food grain production in 2015-16 by the Union Ministry of Agriculture. On other side hilly state is striving hard to keep pace with National Food Security Act.2013 (NFSA) provisions to mitigate the food feed needs of its population through TPDS. So it becomes the need of hour to look into government’s mechanism (in form of various policy and programs) in place, to ensure enough food for all, at all times to lead a healthy life.

KEYWORDS: National Food Security Act, Anatyodaya Anna Yojana, Fair Price Shop, Food Security, Eligible households, Ration card, Food grain,

Himachal Pradesh is a state where about 90 percent population is rural. Therefore agriculture had have been the mainstay of the population in absence adequate industrialization which left them with no or least avenues to earn bread and butter anywhere else except agriculture

sector. There is growing concern about the availability of enough food to poor and vulnerable communities of agrarian population at all sphere, national as well as state level. It has been estimated that of about 7.7 billion people in the world about 700 million people suffer from hunger. According to The Global Hunger Index Report 2019 (GHI), India has been performing poorly on food security frontier, ranked 102nd out of 117 countries of the world and placed at the bottom as compare to its south Asian neighbors such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan. This GHI report reveals that India is suffering from a serious hunger problem. The recent GHI report focused on “challenge of hunger and climate change” states that climate change is making it ever difficult to adequately and sustainably feed and nourish the human population. Climate change has adversely affected food production, availability, access, quality, utilization and stability of food systems. In present scenario agrarian distress is quite pronounced in India while country’s granaries are overflowing. The Indian government has been possessed a surplus of 73.1 million tons of wheat and rice up to July, 2019 and stocks are further projected to increase by 10 million tonnes by July 2020. Moreover, it is evident from the food stocks available in the country that we have enough to feed our people. In 2006, when HDI Published its maiden report, India’s ranking was a dismal 96th among 119 countries, sliding further year after year to 102 in 2019. Therefore, different studies have shown that food spending was declining in India especially among rural population and urban poor. Food consumption in rural areas has steadily dropped by 10 per cent 2011-12 to 2017 - 18. Here, it is important to mention that the overflowing granaries could have been very effectively opened and used to meet the nutritional needs of a large chunk of our population.

By and large it is necessary to understand that no country has so far solved the problem of food insecurity by sole reliance and focus merely on agriculture. Income generation through non-agriculture endeavors, rural development programs along with government policies aimed at providing food security nets have their usual important role to play.

Concept & Definition:

The basic concept of food security refers that ‘it is access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life’. It is not only quantity of food which is available to people in society but its quality is also of prime concern. In the era of self sufficiency or nearing to it in food grain production, fundamental question arise, is each Indian getting enough to eat around the year?

Professor Esther Duflo & Professor Abhijeet Banerjee Nobel laureate who win this prize for their path breaking work on development and poverty alleviation. Professor Duflo said , “ This is really a story like an elephant where if you look at the poorest people in the world, their income has gone up quite a bit during the last three decades; so that the back of the elephant. However, if you are looking at the richest people in the world, their income has gone up even more. So it is the trunk of the elephant. So problem is that anybody in between has

been squeezed in.” She emphasized on, to preserve the gains for the poorest for near future and simultaneously devise a mechanism to curb high income growth of rich people.

According to Economic Survey of India 2000-01, the per capita availability of major constituents namely cereals, pulses, oils and vegetables are sharply down from the preceding year. Per capita food production failed to keep pace with ever growing population, population increased at the rate of about 1.84 percent annually while food grain production increased at 0.9 percent during 90’s. It has been estimated that the food intake of Indian population has declining across the regions, between as little as meager 1 percent in Himachal Pradesh to 11 percent in Rajasthan. The hill state of Himachal Pradesh has attained distinction of being regarded as model state of hill development in the country, especially in the production of off-season vegetables, seed potato, fruits etc.

But there are still doubts about the equitable distribution of gains of development which failed to trickle down to the last man. Thus it indicates that underprivileged sections may not have gained significantly and their status may have remained more or less intact. The successful implementation of “Food Insecurity Vulnerability Information and Mapping System”(FIVIMS) a Food And Agriculture Organization (FAO) sponsored program drew some contours on the state of food insecurity front in Himachal Pradesh. The FIVIMS survey revealed that the abject lack of exposure to modern techniques of breeding, harvesting and utilization of livestock has resulted in low productivity as well as low income to some under privileged Communities. As many as 213 out of total 20,118 villages were designated vulnerable while 58 villages were most vulnerable to food insecurity in the hilly state. In Himachal Pradesh Agriculture and allied activities has been mainstay of about 69 percent of agrarian population who are mostly undertaking farm activities for themselves rather than market of with least or no marketable surplus and mostly unable to suffice their household food-feed requirements.

Objectives of the study:

Look into food grains production at the national & state level.

To analyze structure and extent of food security net in terms of food availability.

To devise and suggest remedies to make these ongoing programs more effective and target oriented in future.

In the 2018, Himachal Pradesh has awarded a coveted national award 'KRISHI KARMAN AWARD' for its outstanding performance in food grain production for the year 2015-16. It was highest food grain production that increased from 14.94 Lakh tonne to 16.40 Lakh tonne during preceding five years. In such situation it is need of hour, to peep into deep in the food-feed policy mechanism and the instruments of the state government which are deployed in the field to ensure all times food for all around the year to lead a healthy life. Especially, it becomes necessary to have a relook on these issues in the light of THE NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT.2013 and the state's strategies' and objectivity in accordance with national agenda. *The NFSA came into force on 5TH July 2013, in the 64th year of the Republic of India, extended all over the India, speaks its relevance and need in the 21st century.* The food security situation in the state has remained under constant watch, as the Department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department has been keeping constant vigil on the food-feed needs of the people, since its inception as a separate unit in 1966.

Here, we have taken into account the food security net in the state during first decade i.e. 2004-05. There was a network of 4131 fair price shops to ensure availability of timely and adequate quantity of the basic commodities at affordable price round the year on monthly basis. All families were divided into four major categories with the sole objective to extend and enhance the government's outreach till the last man of the society.

These were the four categories of families viz.

- (i) Above Poverty Line (APL)
- (ii) Below Poverty Line (BPL)
- (iii) Anatyodaya (poorest)
- (iv) Annapurna (indigent).

Presently these are the categories provided with food-feed need through Public Distribution System.

It was believed that right identification of actual poor of the society and their right segregation in respective categories, according to the magnitude of poverty would definitely lead the program to a great success. These consumer families were then entitled for different quantities of variety of basic food and non-food items through a family ration cards. This entitlement was purely based on family size and category. In this context per capita food grains availability has been shown in the table barely on the basis of state's production while at the national level it is being estimated by inclusion of production plus imports.

Table-1

Per capita Availability of Food Grains in Himachal Pradesh v\s All India

| Year | All India | | Himachal Pradesh | |
|------|-------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| | Annual K.G. | Per day Grams | Annual K.G. | Per day Grams |
| 2009 | 177.7 | 486.8 | 201.8 | 577.5 |
| 2010 | 178.4 | 488.7 | 182.8 | 500.8 |
| 2011 | 180.1 | 493.3 | 206.9 | 566.8 |
| 2012 | 179.6 | 491.9 | 225.7 | 618.4 |
| 2013 | 179.5 | 491.9 | 225.1 | 616.7 |
| 2014 | 178.6 | 489.3 | 229.6 | 629.1 |
| 2015 | 169.8 | 465.1 | 225.4 | 617.5 |
| 2016 | 177.7 | 486.8 | 238.1 | 652.3 |
| 2017 | 178.4 | 488.7 | 185.5 | 508.2 |
| 2018 | 180.1 | 493.3 | 216.8 | 593.9 |
| 2019 | 179.6 | 491.9 | 246.6 | 675.6 |
| 2020 | 183.1 | 501.8 | 232.3* | 636.4 |
| 2021 | 185.4 | 507.8 | 244.1** | 668.7 |

Food grains include rice, wheat, other cereals and cereals plus pulses.

*Approximate, **Estimated

Sources: pib.gov.in

Press Information Bureau. G.O.I., Ministry Of Agriculture and Farmers welfare

12th Dec.2014-15

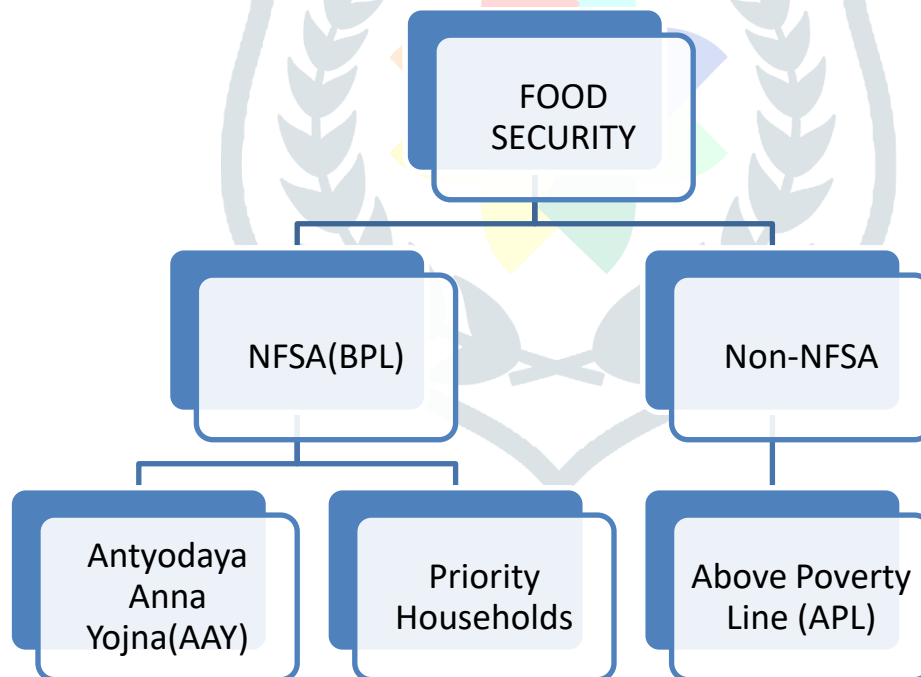
Economic Survey 2020-21, Statistical appendix-41, Economic Survey 2021-22.

Statistical Abstract2014-15 Govt. of Himachal Pradesh.

On one hand government has expanded its distribution network with full strength, consequently number of distribution counter has increased to 4,918 by 2018-19, on other hand, the family identification has been done with more accuracy to enhance the out-reach of TDPS to the last man of society. Thus total families have been divided (re-divided) on the line with National Food Security Act (NFSA). Following have been the categorization viz.

- (i) National Food Security Act. (NFSA) eligible households (as defined under NFSA)
- (ii) Other than National food Security Act. NFSA (APL)

It is evident from the clear cut segregation of the NFSA and non- NFSA households that government has made its mind to emphasis particularly on BPL households of deprived and underprivileged class. Such consumers have been targeted in both tribal and non tribal areas. The Targeted Public Distribution System (TDPS) having total ration cards 18, 32,389 (operational) covering 74, 169,13 population. Therefore, card holders have been provided with entitled food and non food items through government's as well as non-government fair price shops(sale counters) throughout the state. Some other social organizations namely cooperative society, Panchayat, Mahila Mandals and individual have been shoulder to shoulder with the Government for the attainment of sole objective of 100 percent food secure society .Under the provisions of National Food Security Act it is mandatory for the central and state governments to strive hard for necessary and urgent reforms in TDPS. In order to keep pace with NFSA guidelines, state has introduced various reforms viz. ensure adhar enabled biometric delivery to the beneficiaries, committed for doorstep delivery food items preferably through public institutions, rotation of commodities time to time(at least twice in a year).



Women empowerment is being done in phased manner, now women of eighteen years or above to be head of household for the purpose of ration cards. Only in exceptional cases male member shall be the head of household. By the year 2018-19 Himachal Pradesh government has increased manifold its procurement as well as distribution of essential food

items through TPDS. Following are the main glimpses of its headways toward fulfillment of food- feed requirements of its people.

Therefore, in order to enhance affordability to all households irrespective of bare entitlement (accessibility) different subsidized prices have been enforced category wise (especially low price for NFSA eligible households with least purchasing power). In consonance with the provisions of NFSA a varied range of food items have been included to the NFSA and non-NFSA consumer basket over previous decade. The size of consumer basket has almost doubled with addition of various pulses and edible oils.

Distribution Pattern and Pace of Essential Food Items Under TDPS in Himachal Pradesh

| Sr.no | Items/commodity | Unit | Distribution upto Dec.2004 | Distribution upto Dec.2018 |
|-------|-----------------------|------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | Wheat /Atta APL | M.T. | 55109 | 1,07,577 |
| 2. | Wheat /Atta BPL | M.T | 35428 | 44,583 |
| 3. | Wheat/Atta AAY/NFSA | M.T | 12047 | 25,529 |
| 4. | Rice (APL) | M.T | 44,339 | 49,963 |
| 5. | Rice (BPL/PHH) | M.T | 57205 | 36,994 |
| 6. | Rice(AAY/NFSA) | M.T | 16133 | 35,362 |
| 7. | Rice (Annapurna) | M.T | 368 | 5 |
| 8. | Levy Sugar (NFSA/APL) | M.T | 44,186 | 28,810 |
| 9. | Pulses | M.T | ----- | 31,339 |
| 10. | Iodised salt | M.T | ----- | 8,028 |
| 11. | Refined oil | K.L | ----- | 4,574 |
| 12. | Mustard oil | K.L | ----- | 15,619 |

Source: Economic Survey Himachal Pradesh 2004-05 &2018-19

Note: Enlisted items are showing actual distribution (excluding stock for tribal areas)

The hilly state of Himachal Pradesh is moving ahead towards the attainment of 100 percent food secure population in consonance with NFSA 2013. It is state sponsored agency the Himachal Pradesh state Civil Supplies Corporation (HPSCSC) which is entrusted with the responsibility of procurement, storage and supply of allocated food grains. Now a day, this agency along with other public institutions, social organizations and individual are the major distribution agents working in food security chain. During the present decade a lot has been accomplished on this front namely identification of eligible households (NFSA & Other than NFSA) digitalization of distribution system through Adhar seeding, preparation of consumer data base and transparent and accountable administration. Food grains procurement and distribution has gone up manifold along with ever increasing financial obligation of the government. Himachal Pradesh is not an exception to the whole country

hence Himachal Pradesh too has almost reached a plateau in so far as cultivable land is concerned.

Here is the list of eminent contributor agents those are responsible to make the state front-runner on food security front and state has been recorded with higher per capita net availability of food grains over the time year after year.

- ✓ Ever increasing food grains production despite majority of miniscule holdings.
- ✓ Technical advancement and extension services
- ✓ Use high yield varieties
- ✓ High literacy rate in the state
- ✓ Efficient distribution system especially non-government agencies & individuals
- ✓ Low rate of corruption in distribution and other sister concerned agencies.

Suggestions must be incorporated to make the state a role model in the country to ensure basic human needs in 21st century. A more synergized approach is needed to indentify and include real food insecure people in the food security net only. Secondly being hill state we need a separate or region based food basket as a measure to gauge food need of the habitants which we are missing in the present policy regime including NFSA. Lastly, complete abolition of APL category from subsidized food beneficiaries list of NFSA and strengthening of market regulatory system.

Although, a series of new challenge has been knocking the door impatiently to the food security system of the state namely unchecked immigrating laborers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Rajasthan poses a serious threat. This problem is going to be more serious in the bordering areas of Himachal Pradesh where the queues of food seeker are becoming endless. Thus it needs government's immediate intervention prior to get the situation worst.

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